

Declaration to Fulfill the Promise of America

With this Declaration, I build on an historic foundation. In April 1997, in front of Philadelphia's Independence Hall, the Nation committed itself to the fundamental belief that every child is a child of promise. This vision, affirmed by the signatures of every living President on this declaration and by Nancy Reagan on behalf of President Reagan, is one to which I commit my Administration and call all Americans to embrace:

Two centuries ago, America was founded on the proposition that just as all people are endowed by their Creator with unalienable rights, citizenship entails undeniable responsibilities. As each of us has the right to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness, each of us has an obligation to give something back to country and community ~ a duty to take responsibility not just for ourselves and our families, but for one another.

We owe a debt of service to fulfill the God-given promise of America, and our children.

In this time of opportunity ~ at the dawn of a new century and a new Millennium ~ the need for shared responsibility is self-evident.

The challenges of today, especially those that confront our children, require a special commitment of us all. People of all ages and from all walks of life must claim society's problems as their own, pulling together, leading by example, and lifting American lives.

Our obligation, distinct and unmistakable, is to assure that all young Americans have

Caring adults in their lives, as parents, mentors, tutors, coaches
Safe places with structured activities in which to learn and grow
A healthy start and healthy future
An effective education that equips them with marketable skills
An opportunity to give back to their communities through their own service

As Americans and as Presidents, we ask every caring citizen to pledge individual commitments of citizen service, voluntary action, the efforts of their organizations, or commitments to individual children in need. By doing so, this Nation pledges the fulfillment of America's promise for every American child.

Today, with this Declaration to Fulfill the Promise of America, I carry this special commitment - from us all into the 21st Century. I call on Americans from every walk of life to join together in fulfilling these Five Promises. And I ask the country to stand as a single nation, united by the common mission of building the character and competence of every child and young person in America.

President George W. Bush